

The Implementation of Speech Therapy in Children with Speech Delay

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the implementation of speech therapy in children with speech delay. Speech delay is a condition where children experience delays in their language development compared to their peers. Early intervention, such as speech therapy, plays a crucial role in overcoming this delay and enhancing children's communication skills. The study focuses on the methods used in speech therapy, the effectiveness of the therapy, and the factors that influence its success. Data were collected through observations, interviews with speech therapists, and assessments of children's progress over time. The findings show that consistent and tailored speech therapy significantly improves language abilities in children with speech delay. Additionally, parental involvement and the use of engaging, child-friendly techniques are key factors that contribute to the therapy's success. This research highlights the importance of early detection and intervention in addressing speech delay and suggests further exploration into innovative therapy methods to optimize outcomes for affected children.

Keywords: Speech Therapy, Child Development, Therapy Effectiveness

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1. INTRODUCTION

Language serves as a foundation for human communication, with the purpose of acquiring and conveying needed information, thereby expanding knowledge. In communication, speaking is one method used to interact by fostering familiarity and understanding in conversations. Simply put, speaking is the process of producing sounds through the sensory organs. Speech and language abilities involve the development of cognitive, sensorimotor, psychological, emotional, and environmental factors surrounding the child (Fitirani et al., 2016).

In the field of psycholinguistics, a branch of linguistics, it is explained that individuals with normal brain function and speech organs are naturally able to communicate well. However, if there are abnormalities in brain function or speech organs, a person will have difficulties in both productive and receptive language skills (Ratih & Nuryani, 2020). Language is communication carried out using a structured

system. For children to use language effectively, they need a broad vocabulary to articulate their thoughts clearly. During the growth and development phases, children may encounter various challenges. These challenges are natural during development, and they are divided into two categories: growth-related issues, such as body size or shape, and development-related issues, such as gross and fine motor skills, social problems, and language difficulties (Fauzia, Wulan & Meiliawati, 2020).

A common issue in language development is speech delay, which is a serious problem that needs immediate attention, as it can hinder other aspects of a child's development (Desiarna & Nafila, 2023). Many parents still lack awareness about this issue, as they do not recognize its signs. If untreated, it can affect the child's academic development, as they may struggle with spelling and reading. Children with speech delays also find it difficult to socialize, as they are often avoided by peers due to their unclear speech.

Speech delay is a prevalent issue in language development that requires immediate attention. If left unaddressed, it can significantly impact various aspects of a child's growth (Desiarna & Nafila, 2023). Unfortunately, many parents are often unaware of the signs of speech delays, which can prevent early intervention. When speech delays are untreated, children may face challenges in their academic development. Struggling with reading and spelling can lead to a cycle of frustration and decreased self-esteem, hindering their overall learning experience. Moreover, children with speech delays often encounter difficulties in social interactions, as their unclear speech may result in being avoided by peers. This social isolation can further exacerbate feelings of loneliness and hinder emotional development.

Recognizing and addressing speech delays early on is crucial to supporting a child's holistic development, ensuring they have the tools necessary for successful communication, academic achievement, and social engagement. Speech delay refers to a child's difficulty in expressing and communicating their thoughts to others, such as speaking unclearly or having a limited vocabulary compared to peers. To diagnose speech delay accurately, an assessment must be conducted to determine whether the issue is solely speech delay or if other conditions, such as ADHD, global developmental delay, or other growth disorders, are present. If it is confirmed that the child only has speech delay without other disorders, speech therapy can be provided by professional therapists using various methods. One effective method to support speech delay treatment is music therapy.

Physiologically, music stimulates the brain to release an analytical process in response to the song being heard. Music is processed through the cochlear nerve and transmitted to the brain, activating the parasympathetic nerves, which influence the pituitary gland to release the hormone beta-endorphin, a happiness hormone (Wadu

& Mediani, 2021). Music encourages singing, helping children expand their vocabulary, thus improving their speaking abilities.

Music has a profound effect on the brain, stimulating complex analytical processes in response to the sounds we hear. When a child listens to music, the auditory signals are processed through the cochlear nerve and transmitted to various regions of the brain. This auditory processing activates the parasympathetic nervous system, which in turn influences the pituitary gland to release beta-endorphin—a hormone often referred to as the "happiness hormone" (Wadu & Mediani, 2021). This physiological response not only elicits feelings of joy and relaxation but also creates an optimal environment for learning. Music encourages children to engage in singing and vocalization, which significantly aids in vocabulary expansion. As children sing along to melodies, they are not only having fun but also practicing pronunciation and language patterns, thereby enhancing their speaking abilities. Through music therapy, children can experience these benefits in a supportive and enjoyable setting, making it an effective tool for preventing speech delays and promoting language development.

Speaking ability in early childhood is crucial for fostering interaction with their surroundings. Therefore, children's speaking skills can positively impact learning outcomes, particularly in early childhood. However, in recent years, developmental delays in speech, commonly referred to as speech delay, have increased. Speech delay disrupts a child's ability to interact and learn, as they struggle to articulate the words they wish to convey.

Thus, professional therapy is necessary to detect and address this issue as early as possible. Music therapy is one option, as it introduces a broad vocabulary that can help enhance the child's language skills. The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of music therapy in preventing speech delay in children aged 3-5 years. In the critical early years of a child's life, language development plays a vital role in their overall growth and social interaction. Unfortunately, many children face challenges such as speech delays, which can hinder their ability to communicate effectively. Therefore, professional therapy is essential to identify and address these issues as early as possible. Among the various therapeutic approaches, music therapy stands out as a promising option. Music therapy not only fosters a playful and engaging environment but also introduces a rich vocabulary through songs, rhymes, and musical activities. This exposure can significantly enhance a child's language skills, making communication more accessible and enjoyable. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of music therapy on preventing speech delays in children aged 3 to 5 years. By exploring this connection, we aim to highlight the potential of music as a therapeutic tool, emphasizing its role in nurturing language development and ensuring that children have the support they need to thrive.

2. METHODS

This research was conducted using a qualitative method aimed at revealing the opinions of experts who have previously studied this issue. The qualitative approach is a process of research and understanding based on methodologies that investigate social phenomena and human problems. In this approach, the researcher emphasizes the socially constructed nature of reality, the close relationship between the researcher and the subject being studied (Noor, 2014).

Qualitative research can be designed to contribute to practical theory, policy, social issues, and actions. It is conducted when the researcher seeks to explore phenomena that cannot be quantified and are descriptive in nature, such as the process of a working step, the formula of a recipe, the diverse understanding of a concept, the characteristics of a product or service, images, styles, cultural customs, physical models of artifacts, and so on. In this study, the sampling technique used is purposive sampling, which involves selecting research subjects who are believed to have in-depth knowledge of the information and issues and are considered reliable sources of solid data. These subjects include the principal, teachers, and students. The interviews with these participants will serve as the primary source of data for the research. There are two types of data sources used in this study: primary and secondary data sources. Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation. In this study, the data analysis model used is the Miles and Huberman model. The data analysis process can be simplified into three stages, as explained by Miles and Huberman

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

There are several strategies used by teachers or parents to help children overcome speech delay issues through speech therapy. However, a major challenge encountered in the field is the lack of professional personnel, such as therapists, counselors, and psychologists, in early childhood education institutions like PAUD, Kindergarten (TK), RA, or Playgroups (KB).

Some methods that can be applied for early childhood in the implementation of speech therapy to address speech delay are as follows:

1. Babbling Method

In this method, the child is asked to produce random sounds (babbling). The production of these sounds is not goal-oriented but rather aimed at activating the child's adaptability to a new environment and helping them select the sounds they produce.

This approach leverages "babbling" as a natural way for children to explore and adapt to the sounds in their environment. When children are encouraged to produce random sounds without specific goals or outcomes in mind, they aren't pressured to say certain words or follow strict patterns. Instead, they freely experiment with a variety of sounds, tones, and rhythms. This spontaneous vocalization helps them become more attuned to their own vocal capabilities and to the sounds they hear around them.

Babbling isn't meant to immediately produce meaningful speech but rather to foster adaptability and a natural selection process. Through repeated babbling, children begin to notice which sounds are easier or more comfortable to produce and which resemble sounds they hear in spoken language. Over time, they naturally start selecting and repeating sounds that are relevant to their environment, gradually shaping their speech skills.

This method can be particularly helpful because it removes the pressure to "perform" or "speak correctly," instead letting children develop a sound base that they can adapt and refine as they learn language.

2. Imitation Method

The child imitates syllables spoken by the speech therapist. The therapist specifically identifies and corrects any incorrect or imperfectly spoken sounds by the child.

This process describes a technique in speech therapy often called *direct imitation* or *auditory stimulation*. Here's how it works:

- a. Imitation of Syllables. The speech therapist will first produce a syllable or word sound (like "ba," "da," "ga") clearly and slowly, and then encourage the child to imitate it. This gives the child a model to follow, both in sound and in articulation (how the mouth, tongue, and vocal cords move).
- b. Identification and Correction. If the child reproduces the sound incorrectly—whether by mispronouncing it, missing part of it, or distorting it—the therapist immediately identifies and corrects the mistake. For example, if a child says "ba" instead of "da," the therapist will point out the difference and may repeat "da" slowly while highlighting the movement of the tongue to reinforce the correct articulation.
- c. Repetition for Reinforcement. Through repetition and positive reinforcement, the child starts to internalize the correct sounds, which helps them learn the physical and auditory aspects of producing clear syllables.

In each session, the therapist begins by clearly pronouncing a sound, breaking it down into simple, distinct syllables for the child to hear. The child watches intently, studying the movement of the therapist's lips, the subtle shifts in tongue placement, and even the rise and fall of their voice. When the child tries to imitate the sound, the therapist listens closely, attuned to each detail.

Sometimes, the child's attempt is a little off—maybe the "s" sounds slightly muffled or the "r" lacks clarity. Without missing a beat, the therapist gently corrects them, reshaping the sound with a patient, steady voice. They might use tools, gestures, or visual aids to help the child understand exactly how to adjust their mouth, tongue, or vocal cords. Through this attentive guidance, the child starts to feel the difference in their own voice—how a small change in movement can create a clear, accurate sound.

Over time, the process becomes smoother. The child learns to feel and control the subtle movements that produce each sound. With every imitation, they become more precise, more confident. And as each incorrect sound is refined and polished, the child's voice grows clearer, stronger, a testament to their hard work and the skillful patience of their therapist. Together, they are shaping not just sounds but a future where the child can speak with confidence and ease.

This approach helps children develop more accurate pronunciation skills by directly hearing and correcting errors, making it easier for them to build up correct sounds that they can use in everyday speech.

3. Music Therapy

Active music therapy involves techniques such as singing, learning to play musical instruments, mimicking melodies, or even creating short songs. In this method, children are encouraged to interact actively with the world of music. Conducting active music therapy requires the guidance of a competent music therapy expert.

Active music therapy is a hands-on approach where individuals, especially children, actively participate in musical activities. This method includes activities like singing, learning to play instruments, imitating musical patterns, or even composing short songs. The main goal is to encourage children to engage with music in ways that help them express themselves, improve their motor and cognitive skills, and boost emotional well-being. Because this approach involves structured interactions and therapeutic goals, it's typically led by a trained music therapy professional. The therapist creates activities tailored to the child's needs, making sure they're both enjoyable and beneficial. Through these interactions, children can develop various skills, from

communication to emotional regulation, within a safe and supportive environment.

Active music therapy is a method that engages children directly in music-making activities, such as singing, playing instruments, imitating melodies, or composing simple songs. The focus is on active participation, encouraging children to connect with music in ways that support emotional expression, communication, and developmental growth. This therapy method requires a trained music therapist, who guides the child through musical exercises designed to meet their specific needs and goals. By actively engaging with music, children can build cognitive, motor, and social skills in a fun, therapeutic setting

4. Storytelling Therapy

The child listens to the therapist tell stories, which helps expand the child's vocabulary through the narratives delivered by the therapist. Continuously exposing the child to storytelling will introduce new words, helping to improve their speaking abilities.

This technique focuses on developing a child's language skills through storytelling. Here's how it works:

- a. **Listening to Stories.** As the therapist tells stories, the child is exposed to structured narratives with a natural flow of language. This provides a context for understanding new words, as they're heard within the story rather than in isolation.
- b. **Vocabulary Expansion.** Stories often include a variety of words, phrases, and expressions that may be new to the child. Hearing these words in context allows the child to pick up on their meanings naturally.
- c. **Continuous Exposure.** Repeated storytelling sessions reinforce the learning process. With each story, the child is introduced to new vocabulary, and they begin to internalize the language patterns and words they hear.
- d. **Enhanced Speaking Abilities.** As the child's vocabulary grows, they're able to use these new words in their own speech. They begin to mimic the structure and rhythm of language from the stories, which helps in building more sophisticated speaking skills over time.

This approach combines listening comprehension with vocabulary development, which can gradually lead to stronger language and communication skills. According with before statement, I'll give the example : Imagine a young child named Alex who meets with a therapist every week. During each session, the therapist tells Alex a new story filled with adventure, colorful characters, and interesting places. One day, the therapist begins with a

story about a brave squirrel named Benny who travels through a big, green forest. As the therapist describes Benny's journey, Alex listens closely, hearing words like "forest," "adventure," and "explore" for the first time.

Each story introduces Alex to a few new words like these, woven naturally into the plot, and without realizing it, Alex begins to understand and remember them. Every week, as the stories continue, Alex's vocabulary expands. Alex begins to understand words like "courageous" when Benny stands up to a fox, or "swiftly" when Benny races through the forest. Hearing these words in action, rather than just as definitions, helps Alex connect the words to their meanings.

The storytelling doesn't stop there. Alex becomes so familiar with Benny and the forest that he starts to retell parts of the story to his family. Alex describes Benny's "courage" and how he "swiftly" moved, trying out these new words in his own sentences. Slowly, Alex gains confidence in speaking, and the words he learns come naturally in his own conversations.

Over time, these storytelling sessions help Alex learn to listen attentively and follow along with complex sentences and ideas. Alex's growing vocabulary supports his self-expression, and the regular storytelling sessions continue to build his language skills naturally and effectively

5. Narration Therapy

The therapist listens to the child tell stories or read books. Although the child may stutter or struggle with pronunciation at first, continuous practice will help them become more comfortable and fluent in speaking over time.

In a quiet room, a child sits across from their therapist, a small book or a favorite story in hand. At first, their voice trembles, and words catch as they try to bring the characters to life, sometimes stammering over sounds or grappling with tricky pronunciations. The therapist, with patient eyes and a warm smile, listens intently, offering gentle encouragement. With each session, the child grows braver, and their voice gains a bit more strength. The simple act of telling stories or reading aloud becomes a powerful tool for transformation. As they read, they're not only practicing the mechanics of speaking but also finding their voice. Through each stumble and correction, they learn resilience, and with time, fluency blossoms. Eventually, what once seemed like an insurmountable hurdle becomes a natural flow of words. It's a beautiful journey of growth, where the child learns that their voice matters and, with practice, can shine.

As the sessions continue, the child grows more confident. Their sentences stretch a bit longer, words that once felt clunky and heavy begin to roll off the

tongue more smoothly. Each time they read or tell a story, the therapist's gentle nods and words of encouragement become a source of strength, silently reminding them that it's okay to take their time—that each word has value.

One day, they surprise themselves. A particularly challenging word that they had stumbled over countless times suddenly flows effortlessly. The therapist notices and acknowledges the moment with a bright smile, and the child beams with pride. It's a victory, a testament to their patience, and the power of persistence.

Through these moments, they not only improve their speech but also start to build a sense of self-assurance. They learn that challenges are not fixed barriers but stepping stones. And with each passing session, they're not just learning to speak fluently—they're learning to tell their story, a story of growth, resilience, and newfound courage.

It's in these quiet exchanges, these small triumphs, that the therapist's true work unfolds: helping the child find the power of their own voice, a voice that they now know can be strong and clear, ready to be shared with the world

4. CONCLUSION

Infants are capable of recording vocabulary from as early as 0 months old. Children who are frequently spoken to by their parents during infancy are less likely to experience speech delay. However, if parents allow their child to become absorbed in their own world without providing sufficient interaction, the likelihood of the child developing speech delay increases. Therefore, it is essential to have therapists or counselors in early childhood education institutions (such as PAUD) to detect developmental disorders, especially in language. This allows for timely interventions to address speech delay in early childhood. The recommended treatment is speech therapy, which should be tailored to the child's interests, ensuring the child enjoys and engages in the therapy sessions.

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